

Systematic Theology Series

Theology Proper: The Study of God the Father

Wednesday Night Teaching Schedule			
Date	Session	Teacher	Topics
10-7	1	Matt	Introduction to Theology Proper: Why Theology Matters and What is Needed in the Study of Theology Proper
10-14	2	Matt	The Trinity: God is 3 in 1
10-21	3	Matt	The Sovereignty, Will and Glory of God
10-28	4	Tom	The Aseity, Immutability and Eternality of God
11-4	5	Matt	The Immensity, Omnipresence, and Omniscience of God
11-11	6	Ben	The Wrath, Jealousy and Patience of God
11-18	7	Rob	The Holiness and Faithfulness of God
12-2	8	Ben	The Love and Goodness of God
12-9	9	Matt	The Grace, Mercy and Wisdom of God

A.W. Tozer in his classical book on theology proper entitled *The Knowledge of the Holy* said, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” Sadly, our fallen world is plagued with a man centered view of God, and the modern church has become deeply infected by this so that what often comes into the mind of many so called believers is not what Scripture teaches regarding the person and work of God the Father. Therefore, we will spend this fall semester on Wednesday nights studying the person and attributes of God. Here at Belcroft Bible we unashamedly have and minister with a high view of God because that is what the Bible declares about God and that is what He demands of us. Thus, as we begin this semester in an ongoing study in systematic theology we will grow deeper in understanding of God that He alone has Ultimate Authority, that He works in Undeniable Sovereignty, that He lives in Unapproachable Holiness, that He is marked by Unquestionable Mercy, that He will bring Undisputable Wrath, that He offers Unfathomable Grace, that His character, plans and promises are all covered in Unending Faithfulness and that all the earth was created to give Him Unequivocal Worship. May the quote below further provoke your thoughts on why this study in Theology Proper matters in our day.

“The god of this century no more resembles the Sovereign of Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday school, mentioned in much of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences, is a figment of human imagination, an invention of maudlin sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods of wood and stone, while millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their carnal minds.” – A.W. Pink

Introduction to Theology Proper¹

I. Course Objectives:

1. Discover the importance of studying God both for personal growth and the mission and purpose of the church.
2. Explore the existence & attributes of God learning to develop a view of God that is balanced by His full array of attributes presented in Scripture, not lopsided or dominated by one or two attributes.
3. Sharpen our discernment against common false teachings about God, noting both how false doctrine robs God of glory and weakens the church.
4. Increase in our desire to worship God as we behold in His word His worthiness, weight, and wonder.
5. Develop the conviction that as believers we must maintain a high and reverent view of God or our families and churches will slide into a smaller view of Him.

II. What is Theology?

- "Theology" is not just a subject of study, but an activity. The word comes from the verb, *theōo* (to worship), and from the noun *logos* (word). The verb was used in classical Greek for a "discourse on the gods and cosmology"; the noun referred to the "science of things divine" (Liddell & Scott, p. 790). A related term, *theologos*, indicated "one who discourses of the gods." This last noun was used for poets, prophets, and diviners who penetrated and discoursed on the mysteries of the Greek gods (*Ibid.*). Of course, for evangelicals, "theology" is focused on the true and living God. The noun, *theologos*, was used by Philo to refer to Moses (*Ibid.*). In the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, the Apostle John is called "the holy and highly esteemed apostle and evangelist and theologian (*theologos*) John" (Moulton & Milligan, p. 287).
 - In the Middle Ages, Theology was the regina scientiarum, the "queen of the sciences. It was dethroned in western society by the "Enlightenment of the 18th century A.D.
 - "Theology" come from two Greek words: Theos = God Logos = Word
- Thus all theology is the discourse or study of God in some form either the person of God in Theology Proper or the thoughts and declarations of God in the other areas of

¹ Grateful for Pastor Tom Leake and GAMA Bible Institute notes that I have used in different ways throughout this study. I use to teach the *Theology Proper* class at the GAMA institute and Tom's notes were used in that class and used by permission in making these notes as well. Also, I am grateful for my seminary notes from Dr. Mook and his class on *Theology Proper* that have been used by permission in helping create these notes for this series.

systematic theology. For this study please know that *Theology Proper is the study of God the Father.*

A. The Focus of Theology: God.

John 17:3 – "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Jer 9:23-24 – Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; But let him who glories in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Since God is ultimately important, the study of Him is the study of ultimate importance.

It is critical that we start this study and every study with a clear, biblical, and humble mindset about the amazing nature of God and the sovereign salvation He Himself brings to all who believe! **WHY? Because God can be truly known but never fully known!**

Exodus 15:11 declares an important truth which forms a good starting place for studying God, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?"

- Israel and the church have declared through the ages that the true God of heaven is unique. He is one-of-a-kind, with no existing being remotely close to His greatness. Who He is and what He does are, and will continue to be, unparalleled.
- This explains in great part why we are so drawn to Him, to worship and adore His unrivaled glory!
- Psalm 89:6-9 echoes this same incomparable nature, "For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD? Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD, 7 A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, And awesome above all those who are around Him? 8 O LORD God of hosts, who is like You, O mighty LORD? Your faithfulness also surrounds You. 9 You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them."
- Psalm 63:2-3 "Thus I have beheld Thee in the sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory. 3 Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise Thee."

B. The Foundation of Theology: The Holy Scriptures.

- 2 Tim 3:16 – All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness... See Deut 6:6-7 cf. 6:1-4; Ps 1:1-6; 19:7-11; 119:1-176; Isa 55:10-11; 2 Pet 1:3-4, 19-20; Eph 4:11-16; Mt 28:18-20; 2

Tim 4:1-5; Heb 4:12-13; Rom 10:17; Col 1:28-29; 2 Tim 3:16-17

- Since Scripture is "God-breathed" (qeo,pneustoj)(theopneustos), then its study with respect to God is of ultimate importance.
 - Because the Scriptures are truthful, we know that what we read in our Bibles gives us the real picture and true understanding of the one, true God.
 - Because the Scriptures are authoritative, we know that what we learn in them about God is binding on our belief and doctrine.
 - Because the Scriptures are inerrant, we know they contain no mistakes, alterations, exaggerations, or distortions about the character, plan, and being of God.
 - Because the Scriptures are sufficient, we know contained in the word of God we have enough material to understand God as He desires us to know Him in this present age.
 - Because the Scriptures are complete and the canon is closed, we know that no further revelation of His glory in this age is expected.
 - Because the Scriptures are clear, we can use the normal, literal approach to interpretation and receive accurately God's revelation of Himself.

C. The Fruit of Theology: Walking with God

- **Blessed Discovery:**
 - the discovery of God's glory, which is a light in the darkness of fallen humanity (Ps 19:7-11; Jn 17:3; 2 Cor 4:5-6)
- **Blessed Discernment:**
 - the discernment of the true God from false gods: (Jer 9:23-24; 10:6-10) and His promises (2 Sam 7:28; 2 Pet 1:3-4)
- **Blessed Despair:**
 - the despair of intensely searching out God's nature and finding His nature is infinitely beyond what one has learned or can learn or reason. The study of God produces a profound despair. But it is a blessed despair, because it leads one to wonder and worship. And this glorifies God and fulfills the human soul (Rom 11:33-36).

Ps 145:3 – Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.

- **Blessed Devotion:**

The study of Theology focuses one's life on the One of ultimate importance, so it blesses one's life with ultimately valid dedication (Ecc 12:13-14; Phil 3:12-14; 1 Cor 10:31).

- **Blessed Development:**

- The study of Theology is essential to spiritual growth. Without it the individual Christian and the Church remain in a spiritually infantile condition (Eph 4:14-15; Heb 5:12-14; 2 Tim 3:16-17)

III. Why Study God?

MacArthur and Mayhew say in *Bible Doctrine*, “Scottish pastor and theologian John Dick answered this penetrating query with seven profound responses. A better and more succinct answer would be difficult to come by:

1. “To ascertain the character of God in its aspect towards us”
2. “To contemplate the display of his attributes in his works and dispensations”
3. “To discover his designs toward man in his original and his present state”
4. “To know this mighty Being, as far as he may be known, [which] is the noblest aim of the human understanding”
5. “To learn our duty to him, the means of enjoying his favor, the hopes which we are authorized to entertain, and the wonderful expedient by which our fallen race is restored to purity and happiness”
6. “To love him, the most worthy exercise of our affections”
7. “To serve him, the most honourable and delightful purpose to which we can devote our time and talents”²

Below are a few more reasons on why this study on *Theology Proper* is so important for us.

1. We are commanded to love God (Deut 10:12-23; Mt 22:37-39; Rom 8:28; 1 Jn 5:2)
2. We are commanded to know God (Jer 9:23-24; Hosea 6:3; Jn 17:3)
3. We are commanded to worship God (1 Chron 16:23-34; Jn 4:23-24; Heb 12:28)
4. We are commanded to serve God (Josh 24:14-15; Rom 12:11; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:14)

² MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R., eds. (2017). [*Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*](#) (p. 35). Crossway.

5. We are commanded to be holy as God is holy (Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:15-16; 2 Cor 7:1)
6. We are commended to tell others about God (Mt 28:18-20; Titus 2; Eph 6:4; 1Pet 2:9; 3:13-17)
7. We are eternally accountable to God (Gen 1-2; Ps 24:1-2; 139; Acts 17:24-31; Heb 9:27)
8. We are all born alienated from God (Gen 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jer 17:9; Jn 3:18, 36; Rom 1:18-32; 3:9-18; Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:21)
9. We must strive against the diminished view of God in the Church (Num 13:25-29; 2 Sam 6:5-7; Ps 50:21; Isa 40:12-31; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Tim 6:15-16; Rev 1:12-19)
10. We must guard against the plethora of errors being taught today (Acts 15:1-21; Rom 15:16-17; 2 Cor 11:12-15; Gal 1:8-9; Col 2:16-23; Jude 3-4; 1 Jn 4:1-6; 2 Pet 2:1-3)
11. We must remember that our greatest joy flows from growing in our knowledge of God (Jerm 9:23-24; Hos 6:3; Ps 139:6; Prov 14:26-27; Jn 17:3; 1 Cor 1:31; Phil 3:7-16; 2 Pet 3:18)

- **God is worthy of our intense and sustained focus.**
- **The Word of God continuously exhorts us to know God.**
- **Not knowing God is a pathetic state.**
- **We benefit greatly by knowing our Creator and Redeemer.**
- **We can instruct others correctly only as we know God.**
- **The contemporary church needs a high and true view of God.**
- Akin, p. 178, "... in much contemporary theology today, the note of God's grandeur, greatness, and glory that so fills the Bible is noticeably missing. Such theology suffers from a doxological deficit. It cannot sing with the psalmist, 'I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name forever and ever.' (Ps. 145:1), nor shout with the heavenly saints, 'Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory' (Rev. 19:6-7). Theology has lost its joy and become a dour enterprise of idea-shuffling and puzzle-scrabbling."
- **We actively guard against errors being taught currently.**

- The devil has made it his task from Genesis 3 forward to slander God's beautiful character and word.
- His activity today continues to diminish God. Some of this diminishment in popular form might sound like these:
 - "God is nature."
 - "God equals love."
 - "God does not send people to Hell."
 - "God can't stop bad things from happening because He gave us freedom."
 - "God accepts everyone just the way they are."
- **Error at the base level of understanding God necessarily affects all other areas of theological study.**
 - Who, for example, could believe the Bible has errors and still believe God always speaks the truth and is powerful to work infallibly through fallible humans to produce a set of writings free from error?
 - Who would buy the lie that God condemns someone after saving them when they know God is faithful to all His promises and does not renege on His callings and offers?
- **We lay the correct foundation for the study of other areas of theology.**
 - God's Spirit works in harmony with God's character and plans.
 - God's word is true because of the truthful character of God.
 - God's Son is fully obedient to the Father and reveals the Father.
 - God's plan for the end times finds fulfillment because God is faithful.
 - We call it "Theology Proper" because, even though all areas of theology related to God, this is the direct study of God's person and attributes.
 - Bibliology (God's Word) Since God is capable and truthful, He makes sure His word is accurately preserved throughout the ages and comes to us inspired, inerrant, and authoritative. Since God is all sufficient, His word comes to us to guide us sufficiently through our personal counseling needs
 - Christology (God's Son) Understanding the two natures of Christ, human and divine, depends on understanding God. What does it mean that all the fullness of deity dwells in Christ in bodily form, Col 2:8f?

- Pneumatology (God's Spirit) How God's Spirit works demonstrates God's attributes such as omniscience and omnipresence.
- Anthropology (God's creation) Man is not God but made by God. He is a creature. Yet he is specially made in the image of God.
- Hamartiology (The fall of God's creation) We must know God's holy will to understand what sin is and why it is destructive.
- The same dependence exists in the other areas of theology:
 - Soteriology (God's deliverance)
 - Ecclesiology (God's church)
 - Angelology (God's spirit servants)
 - Eschatology (God's future plan)

So all theology is related to God.

IV. What We Must Have as We Study God

1. A Regenerate heart and Illumination by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14-16; Titus 3:4-7)
2. A Disciplined Mind (Ps 139:1-18; Prov 4:20-27; 2 Cor 10:4-6)
3. An Inquisitive Mind (Acts 17:11; Ps 139:1-18; Prov 2:1-22; Ps 1:1-6; Job 28:1-28; 2 Sam 24:1 & 1 Chron 21:1)
4. An Ability to think in Abstract and Concrete Terms (2 Cor 4:16-18; Col 3:1-4; Rom 5:1-5; Isa 66:1-2)
5. Holy Attitudes
 - a. Reverence and Worship (Rom 11:33-36)
 - b. Faith (Heb 11:3-6)
 - c. Humility (Js 4:5-10; 1 Pet 3:15; 5:5-11)
 - d. Obedience (Js 1:22; Jn 14:15)
 - e. Teachableness (Prov 9:9; 21:11)

V. Where We Must Go in Our Study of God

1. God's Self Revelation (Ps 1:1-6; 19:7-11; 119:97-104; 2 Tim 3:15-17)

2. Not Human Reason or Experience (1 Cor 2:9-10; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 4:7; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Titus 1:13-14)
3. Not Nature Alone (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:18-23)
4. Not False Revelations (Jer 23:21; 1 Jn 4:1; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21)